
News Release

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Spouses of Military Service Members Killed and Disabled Now Eligible for Education Benefits

RICHMOND— Legislation passed by the 2006 General Assembly now provides education benefits to the spouses of military members killed, missing in action, taken prisoner, or 90 percent disabled as the result of military service in an armed conflict. The program waives the cost of tuition, fees, room, board, and books at any state-supported college or university in Virginia.

HB 1272 expanded the Virginia War Orphan Education Program and renamed it the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (MSDEP). Previously, spouses were not eligible for education benefits and the age limit for children capped at age 25. Under the new legislation, spouses and children between ages 16 and 29 are eligible for up to four years of education benefits. There are no age restrictions on the eligibility of spouses.

“More than 900 children of military service members were enrolled under the War Orphan Education Program during the 2005-2006 school year,” said Vince Burgess, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS). “This legislation opens the program to spouses. The opportunity for additional education may help some of these spouses make a better life for their families.”

The military service member must have been a Virginia citizen at the time he or she entered the military or must have been a Virginia citizen for at least five years prior to the surviving dependent’s application for admission. The surviving spouse may also satisfy residency requirements if he or she lived in Virginia for at least five years prior to marrying the

service member or has been a citizen of Virginia for at least five years immediately prior to the date of application.

Eligibility will usually be determined using documentation from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. However, the military service member or applicant may be asked to provide documentation verifying residency, the applicant's age or relationship.

Additional information about the program and eligibility requirements is available at the DVS website, www.dvs.virginia.gov.

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